

THE LEISURE HOUR.

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Couper*



GUSTAVUS VASA REVISITS DALECARLIA.

GUSTAVUS VASA; OR, PRINCE AND PEASANT.

CHAPTER XII.—RECONCILIATION AND DEATH.

GUSTAVUS VASA sat in the large lofty saloon of the royal palace in Stockholm, surrounded by the senators and deputies of the kingdom. Now that his country had been entirely freed from the Danes, he wished to relinquish the office of stadtholder; but he was entreated by all present to accept a still higher one, and become their king.

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To this proposal he replied: "A king is an individual not to be envied. Do what he may, he will never satisfy all—will never be able to govern to their liking. Our country requires many sacrifices, and great ones too. Now, to demand such from the people would be the king's first care. I am neither vain nor proud enough to strive for the splendour of a crown which so often pains the head that wears it. Yes, my friends, I do not think myself equal to healing the many wounds from which our country

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

still bleeds. You will be sure to find some one amongst you better suited to the office than I, a leader who was only able to drive back the invaders by the aid of the brave Swedes."

At this reply most of the hearers burst into tears; several fell on their knees and conjured him, for the sake of their country's welfare, not to refuse compliance with their unanimous wish. Even the Pope's nuncio urged the senators not to cease importuning him to accede to their request. At length he yielded, and with the sincerest joy they all took the oath of allegiance. The new king swore in return to govern according to the laws of Sweden.

"I implore God," said he, whilst taking the oath, "to grant me wisdom like Solomon's to govern my people in the right way. The wisest of men have erred, and their faults have sometimes dimmed the brightness of crown and sceptre. I also may fail; in which case I shall be very grateful to faithful friends who will tell me the truth in a proper manner; while, on the other hand, I shall reject with contempt the proffered counsel of despicable flatterers, who call even what is wrong—right. This one thing I would ask of you: the fullest confidence, which is the best support of thrones and the greatest promoter of the people's happiness, as well as of our holy religion."

The acclamations which followed these words had not quite died away when some petitioners presented themselves before the newly-elected king.

"Look there, my trusty counsellors," said Gustavus, smiling, "in the first hour of my new honours my new cares commence. How numerous will be the wishes to which I shall be forced to attend, and how often will it be impossible to gratify them! But in this propitious hour I must not dismiss the petitioners unheard. Let them advance."

A woman, leading a child with either hand, silently approached the king, and knelt down before him. Her eyes were dimmed with tears, and now her loud sobs almost rendered her words unintelligible.

"What do you want, good lady?" asked the king, mildly; "speak, don't be alarmed."

"I am Perssen's wife, these are his children," replied the trembling woman. "Oh, king! show your royal mercy to my husband, and the father of these little ones; forgive him his guilt!"

"His guilt is very great," said his majesty, seriously. "His first treacherous act, like all evil, led to many more shameful ones. His treachery has deprived me of my most faithful servant—my deliverer from many surrounding dangers. Poor Bay's wretched assassin would never have dared to lift his hand against me, or my follower, if Perssen had not set him a bad example. Notwithstanding his treachery, however, I have already assured him pardon; and what the stadholder promised, the king will not cancel. Rise, your husband will now be restored to you."

By order of the king, Perssen was brought into his presence. He presented the sad picture of a contrite sinner; yet those who beheld him evinced no other feeling towards him but that of contempt, horror, and indignation. Pale, trembling, and with downcast eyes, he awaited his sentence. The king, addressing him, said: "You are free, Perssen. Be happy again, if ever you can be so, after your atrocious deeds. But I advise you to hide yourself and your disgrace in that solitary valley where you went to betray your unsuspecting guest. You are indebted to this noble wife of yours, and to your children, for your pardon;

therefore be grateful and just as husband and parent—go home in peace." To Perssen's wife he said, "To you, madam, and your children, I shall always be a faithful friend."

The lady sank down in silence at the king's feet, and immediately after retired with her husband and children. While she was leaving, she met an elderly woman in deep mourning, who, at the sight of the two children, first stood still, wrung her hands, and exclaimed, in accents of passionate grief, "Such were my children! my beloved, my innocent children!" Then, with affectionate impetuosity, she drew the two boys to her bosom and covered them with caresses.

"Who is she?" asked every one. "Who is she?" re-echoed on every side.

"Who are you? What request have you to make?" demanded the king.

"Has my grief so changed me that I am no longer to be recognised?" said the woman; and lifting up her widow's veil, disclosed an afflicted, sorrow-stricken face. "I am Anna Ribbing, the most miserable of all mothers! What it is I require at your hands I no longer know; the sight of those two children has driven everything else out of my mind. Yes, oh king! give me back my children, and I will bless you from henceforth and for ever."

"Here, for a beginning, we have a desire which we cannot gratify," said the king to the assembly. "To do that is beyond human power. Lady, am I God, that I can resuscitate the dead? And even if I could I would not. Does your self-love make you so regardless of the happiness of your children, that you should wish them back from the enjoyment of heavenly bliss, to this world full of misery and care? Would they not, sooner or later, have again to encounter the agony of death? Not for earth, but for heaven should we live. It is there you must look for consolation in your affliction. Listen to what more I have to tell you. As Jesus Christ has become the corner-stone of our Holy Church, so have your murdered children become the corner-stone of our country's deliverance from the Danish yoke. It was their execution that aroused the oppressed Swedish people to turn against the foreign tyrant. If your children were still alive, we, and all the many thousands of Sweden's children, would now be under Christian's threatening sword. Yes, lady, from the blood of your children wantonly shed sprung the tree of freedom for Sweden. Even the blood which was paid for has become a blessing. The murder of your children has effected a miracle. It has changed a once unreflecting, weak-minded man, dead to all that was good, into a thoughtful, sincere penitent. To this man, Sweden, under Providence, is deeply indebted. Without his assistance I should surely have again fallen into the hands of the Danes. And now, dear lady, a word more. Should you still entertain an angry feeling towards him who deprived you of your youngest child, at the instigation of the cruel king, as a Christian you will follow the sublime example of One who, even when nailed to the cross, prayed for his murderers. Not without a cause has God directed your steps here, as you will soon perceive."

The king now spoke aside to one of his attendants, who speedily withdrew. Every eye looked on with amazement, and anxiously awaited the result. The folding doors of the saloon soon opened, and with slow steps the four young Dalecarlians, Henrick, Malo, Levin, and Tauwsen, walked in, carrying a litter with a bed on it, and put it down in mute

reverence before the king. It was easily guessed who lay on the bed, though the large-limbed, stalwart Bav would scarcely have been recognised but for his red hair, the fast-approaching hand of death had so altered him. The broad, high-vaulted chest had narrowed and fallen in; the once full and ruddy face was now shrunk, and its white transparent skin shrivelled. His forehead, compared with what it had been, seemed higher; and his beautiful, mild blue eyes lay small and deep in their sockets. The colourless lips could scarcely be distinguished from the mouth, while the large hands looked like those of a skeleton. Thus the gigantic Bav, once the terror of his country's foes, had become—what every human being must—as a yellow leaf which death's hand shakes from the autumnal tree and scatters abroad.

When Gustavus approached the dying man, a flickering smile hovered over his face, and his right hand rose slowly from the bed. The king pressed it affectionately, and turning to the Widow Ribbing, said, with emotion, "Behold there, lady, the instrument of the death of your youngest son. Although he committed the sin unconsciously, he has deeply repented it, and has tried to atone for it by a life of fidelity and self-sacrifice. Mrs. Ribbing, if you would not wish your daily repetition of the Lord's Prayer to be recorded in heaven as a sin against you, forgive him from your heart. Shall he go to your children without a loving salutation from you?"

The widow advanced, and placing her right hand on the dying man's forehead, said solemnly, "I forgive you! and may our Heavenly Father forgive you also."

"I trust He will," replied Bav, in a firm voice, "for my crucified Redeemer's sake. Yes, I am assured of it, for do you not see there, mother?" pointing heavenward with his raised hand, "your little son, with his beautiful curly head? He is no more angry with me, but smiles sweetly while he stretches out his little hands to welcome me! I am coming, dear child, I am coming!"

Bav's hand fell heavily at his side, and his head, which he had raised from the pillow, sank back. Another deep-drawn breath, and the dead lay with a blissful smile about his mouth. Thus died Bav the peasant.

"Oh, take me hence with you!" sobbed Mrs. Ribbing, with overpowering grief. Henrick, with scalding tears, kissed his uncle's right hand, while his three companions mournfully contemplated the deceased. The king closed the eyelids of the departed, and with a troubled voice spoke thus:—

"I have become richer in that I possess a crown; but with it I am poorer, for I have lost a faithful friend. God's peace be shed over you, Bav, the defender of my life!"

After this he turned aside to hide his flowing tears, while the assembly, sympathising with their sovereign, silently left the presence-chamber.

CHAPTER XIII.—RECOMPENSE AND PUNISHMENT.

"SURELY something must have happened to Henrick!" said Mrs. Mindsen to her daughter, with great anxiety. "Unless he is loitering in the camp he might have been back by this time. Would that I had not allowed him to go! The whole work of the farm now falls on us two. Servants are difficult to be had, and much more difficult is it to provide for their wages.

Maid-servants do not like it either, for they have to do what properly speaking is man's labour. Bav is no longer here, though he rather helped to make us poor, and now Henrick is also away. Although there is little to do in the stable, there is so much the more labour in the field. The horses are gone, and the two cows and pig would not be there if Bav had not thought of us. Hark! what sound is that? Do you hear it, Rosanna?"

"Music and shouting," replied Rosanna, growing pale, for since she had been so ill-used by the Danes she had become very timid.

"Can it be the Danish horsemen again?" exclaimed Mrs. Mindsen, greatly alarmed.

Mother and daughter now listened attentively.

"Those are not the shouts of war or of woe," said the former, somewhat relieved.

"Oh, look, mother!—look what comes there!"

Four mounted trumpeters, richly attired, their shining trumpets decorated with sky-blue ribbon, with broad cocked hats and the breasts of their coats with variegated flowers, and their full red cheeks looking as if ready to burst with their exertion, rode at the head of a procession. At their heels followed a flock of snow-white sheep, preceded by a ram, on whose horns were fastened a number of little silver bells, each separated from the other by a rosette of blue ribbon. The young shepherd who drove them, with a white staff ornamented also with blue ribbon, was Malo, newly dressed from head to foot. Then came two goats, a buck, and three kids, which joined their bleating to that of the sheep. Of these Levin, who also wore gay flowers on his breast and on his hat, had charge. To Tauwesen's lot it had fallen to be the driver of six half-grown farrows, which, according to the nature of swine, give him no little trouble to keep in their places on the line of march, while the poor perspiring fellow himself was scarcely noticed by the admiring crowd, for immediately behind his troublesome charge majestically stalked seven fine well-fed cows, which might certainly be well compared to Pharaoh's fat kine. The foremost, a brown one, had a large silver bell suspended from her neck, the clear ring of which might be heard at a great distance. When Henrick's blooming face shone forth in the rear of these, Mrs. Mindsen evinced her joyful surprise by a loud exclamation, to which her son responded by a cheering nod.

Amongst the horsemen, with whom the procession terminated, the first was distinguished by the splendour of his dress and the benignity of his countenance. The trumpeters led the way to the gate, at which Mrs. Mindsen and her daughter were now standing. The latter hastened to open it wide, in which she was assisted by several peasants, when lo! the whole assemblage of men and animals entered the spacious courtyard, to the farther end of which the widow retired as they approached. Thus probably looked the living presents which the returning Jacob sent to his brother Esau, for these flocks and herds were destined as a present to the Mindsen family. Gustavus Vasa, amidst hearty shouts of applause, alighted from his horse and advanced towards Mrs. Mindsen, who with her daughter threw herself at his feet.

"Arise, good woman," he kindly said to her, "it is not right that you should kneel. Was I not your servant once, and you my kind and considerate mistress? Could I, after the enemy was expelled, fulfil a holier duty than to pay a debt of gratitude? Though Sweden and its king are poor at present, that must

not prevent him from rewarding according to his means—at least those who have deserved to be worthily remembered by him. This little flock of animals, however, is not a present from your king; it is the inheritance of your brother-in-law, whose life was lost in saving mine. But while I stand here I am reminded that you once gave your servant a hard blow on his shoulder. Before I say more I must return that blow with interest. Kneel down, Mrs. Mindsen, and," continued Gustavus with a smile, "don't be afraid."

Mrs. Mindsen shook like an aspen leaf, and turned as white as a corpse. When on her knees the king drew his sword, and slightly touching her shoulder with the flat side, said aloud, "With this I dub you, Eva Mindsen, a baroness of Sweden, and declare that your descendants shall also be barons and baronesses. Your estate from henceforth shall be freehold, exempted from taxes and duties of every kind; and I hereby add to it the ten adjoining acres of meadow land, which have hitherto belonged to the crown, so that the inheritance of your brother-in-law shall never be in want of pastureage."

Having thus graciously exercised his kingly prerogative, Gustavus raised the baroness from her kneeling posture and cordially shook her by the hand. He then made Rosanna show him the marks of the nails in her hands, and while examining them, slipped a handsome ring on the blushing maiden's finger, and at the same time hung a gold chain of exquisite workmanship round her snow-white neck; for he well knew that all women, especially the younger ones, were fond of such ornaments. During this ceremony, one of the royal attendants had quietly placed a sealed bag on the corner of the table, which had been repaired. The contents of the bag were not marked on the outside, but the Swedish dollars within amounted, with compound interest, to much more than the sixty which had been paid to Bav as the price of blood. After the sheep, goats, pigs, and cows had been placed in their respective pens, and while the recently created baroness was still shedding tears of joy and gratitude, a new scene presented itself to her wondering eyes. The four equestrian trumpeters were, as if by magic, transformed into pedestrians, while the horses they had ridden were heard neighing and stamping in the stalls which till now had been empty. The horses had been designed by the king to labour in the fields of the new freehold.

The king now turned to leave, followed by the villagers with every demonstration of affectionate loyalty. They were accompanied by the baroness and her children, Rosanna and Henrick. As they walked on, the latter informed his mother and sister of the grand funeral Bay had received, and of the costly monument erected to his memory at Stockholm. The whole party soon arrived at the part of the village where a car, with four horses attached to it, was standing. On the floor of the car was a large gilt crown resting on a heap of beautiful flowers, which produced a much finer effect than a velvet cushion could do. A procession was then formed which, led by the king and followed by the car with the crown, proceeded to the cemetery of Swardstio. Here Gustavus made them show him the grave of their late pastor, who had lodged him for a week in his house, and afterwards had recommended him to his colleague at Rättwick. Stepping forward to the spot pointed out, Gustavus uncovered his head and knelt down, all present following his example. He

then offered up prayers and thanksgivings, to which the whole assembly devoutly said, "Amen! Amen!"

After this the king ordered the crown to be placed on the point of the steeple, that by its splendour the good pastor's glory might be proclaimed far and wide throughout the surrounding country. The meeting now broke up, and the people again raised their voices in praise of their grateful sovereign.

As Gustavus had taken this journey expressly for the purpose of thanking all those who had shown kindness to him before his elevation to the throne, the Swedish people evinced their love for his memory in various ways, amongst others in preserving intact the barn in which he thrashed so awkwardly.

The Swedes infer, as from his many noble deeds they are well entitled to do, that Gustavus possessed other virtues besides gratitude, nor are they mistaken in this. It is not always that kings and others in power retain a lively recollection of the good services rendered to them. Very often and very soon do they forget what, when in adversity, they promised their benefactors, of which we have an instance in King Pharaoh's upper cupbearer, not to mention many more recent ones. Under Gustavus Vasa's rule, however, the well-being of the people was cared for, the resources of the country were developed, and Sweden acquired a national importance which she has not lost to this day.

And King Christian the Second, what became of him? In the same way that he had tormented the Swedes, he commenced to treat his own subjects, the Danes. Consequently, they did just as the Swedes had done, drove the tyrant away and chose another king in Frederick, Duke of Holstein. With such an army as he could get together, Christian made a last effort to regain his lost throne. But as money fell short, and as people seldom serve a tyrant but for the sake of money, his soldiers, servants, and flatterers withdrew, leaving him to the mercy of his enemies, who took him prisoner, separated him from his wife and children, and shut him up in an old castle, where he died after an imprisonment of *seven-and-twenty years*. There he had time and space for repentance; but as Christian was ever averse to religion, that only source of consolation was closed to him. He who once had a host of venal courtiers and flatterers at his call, was now, in his solitude, without a human being to speak to, save an old, ugly Norwegian dwarf, who, like many dwarfs, disliked all those who were better favoured by nature, and not even the king escaped his malice.

"Bring me a bottle of Burgundy, Teeks," said Christian, one evening in the autumn of the year 1560. The dwarf withdrew and returned with a bottle of water, which, with an expression of malicious joy, he placed before his master, saying, "This is better for you, old man, than fiery Burgundy, which only heats your blood and disturbs your brain."

The irritated king seized the bottle to throw at his head, but Teeks ran off, scoffing, and bolted the door of the room into which he had fled. Christian followed, and in his rage dashed the bottle to pieces against the door, exclaiming, "Oh that I had a sword to kill you, venomous reptile!"

"Or your former executioners," cried Teeks, mockingly, through the keyhole, "that they might deal with me as they did with the innocent little Ribbings."

"Wretch!" stammered Christian, as he retired

from the door, "must you always be calling up these bloody phantoms which I thought to have banished from me long ago?"

Christian walked to and fro musing, till he trembled at the sound of his own footstep. At last he slunk up to the bolted door, and said, mildly,—

"I am no more angry with you, dear Teebs."

"But I am with you," replied the dwarf.

"Come out, good Teebs," continued Christian.

"I will not," replied the dwarf, obstinately.

"Your king entreats you to do so, do you hear?"

"A nice king!" scoffed the dwarf, "without a country and subjects! without power and money! without a crown and sceptre! without servants and soldiers!"

Here Christian gnashed his teeth, but only for a moment, and then said, in a persuasive tone,—

"Come out, dear Teebs, I will not be unjust to you."

"You promised that solemnly more than a hundred times," replied the dwarf, "but you never kept your plighted word. No, though you had sworn an oath in confirmation of it!"

Christian's whole frame shook with rage, and his wrinkled face was dreadfully distorted. "And I was once a king!" he murmured to himself; "what disgrace! and I cannot avenge it!" Then addressing Teebs, he said, "Will you on no consideration accede to my wish?"

"First pick up the pieces of the glass bottle from the floor," answered Teebs; "and then, perhaps, I may be moved. But see that you pick them all up," he continued, warningly.

The tyrant, with his back bent and his knees stiffened by age, stooped down in obedience to the order and commenced picking up the pieces.

"Have you done?" asked the dwarf, impatiently.

"Yes, dear Teebs," replied the exhausted Christian.

The door opened, when the dwarf came out without speaking, and seated himself in an arm-chair near to a latticed window.

"Look, Teebs, how the shadows are lengthening," said Christian; "light a candle."

"Why?" asked the dwarf, peevishly; "for your work methinks there is still light enough; or perhaps you see ghosts rising up about you?"

"Only do me the favour," replied Christian; "I shall soon die."

The dwarf burst out into a mocking laugh. "That's what you said you would do long ago, and in that too you lied. It would be the best thing you could do, for your life is only a burden to yourself and to me. If I knew that you would keep your word, I would light all the candles I could find in the castle."

"Do so, dear Teebs," said Christian, "for my heart has suddenly become oppressed."

"All sham," muttered the dwarf to himself, nevertheless he went to fetch the candles.

The king sat down in a high arm-chair, and followed with his eyes the hands of the dwarf as he arranged the lights in the room.

"Now, is that as you wish it, old man?"

"Come here," begged Christian, gasping for breath; "place yourself before me there. Now a little more to the right. No, again more to the left, that I may not see them!"

"Who do you see?" asked the dwarf, with a malicious grin; "those whom you executed at Stockholm, or the two little Ribbings at Jönköping?"

Christian was indebted to the dwarf for the answer. His eyes closed and opened. A cold perspiration broke out on his forehead, and on his hands, which, in his desire for help, he stretched out to the dwarf, and he touched his clothes as he stood before him.

"Dear," said the dwarf, ironically, "do not soil my clothes like that, or I shall be scolded by my mother." *

Christian's head reclined on his heaving chest. He raised it again for a moment, when his eyes glared with a deadly fear, and his right hand was raised as if to strike a blow. Just at that instant he himself was struck by the hand of Death, and fell back lifeless in his chair!

The dwarf approached, and held two burning candles in a prying manner close to his face. "He is dead," he exclaimed, "and I am free!"

He then turned his back to the king's corpse, blew out the candles, and left the room to announce to the guard the death of their prisoner.

Thus died King Christian, whom history has sur-named the Tyrant.

THIRTY YEARS OF THE REIGN OF VICTORIA.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS BY JOHN TIMBS.

XV.

I AM warned that the space allotted to me is nearly filled; but before drawing these Recollections to a close, I must refer to two or three other notable persons whose influence has been great in the period of which I write.

The mission of Father Mathew in the cause of temperance, was an illustration of energy and indomitable perseverance rarely witnessed. In the execution of his purpose he did not scruple to sacrifice his temporal prospects; a distillery in the south of Ireland, which belonged to his brother, and formerly provided him with almost all his income, being shut up in consequence of his preaching against the use of ardent spirits. His services in the cause of morality and religion having been recognised by statesmen of all shades of opinion, her Majesty granted to Father Mathew, out of the Civil List, an annuity of £300—a sum which, an example in itself, is understood to have been little more than sufficient to keep up the payment on policies of assurance upon his life, obtained for the sake of securing his creditors. Father Mathew died on the 8th of December, 1856. Great honour was paid to his memory, as statues and other testimonials attest. But it is to be feared that his influence has diminished, and that Ireland needs another "apostle of temperance."

Another great advocate of temperance, James Silk Buckingham, I have already mentioned in connection with popular literature, his services as founder and early proprietor of the "Atheneum" being worthy of respectful record. I recall his name here as one of the most successful educators of the young by means of oral and illustrated lectures. For many years his chief occupation was the delivery of lectures in public schools and in various parts of the country. His choice of subjects, style, and especially his manner, were popular and pleasing, and his lectures contained an extraordinary amount of informa-

* Alluding to the words of the youngest Ribbing when under the hands of the executioner.

tion. In 1815 he travelled overland to India, through Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia, dressed in Turkish costume, and speaking Arabic, which, he stated, is more or less understood in all those countries. In 1816 he was in Calcutta, and established a journal there, but the boldness of his censures on the mal-administration of Indian affairs led to his expulsion from the presidency of Bengal; his printing-presses were seized, and he was compelled to return to England. He retaliated for this, forcibly and justly. After his arrival in London, Mr. Buckingham delivered many lectures against the monopoly of the East India Company, and in support of opening the trade to China. He was reimbursed by subscription for the losses he had sustained by the suppression of his journal. He established in London the "Oriental Herald," next the "Sphynx," and the "Athenaeum" (the two latter, in his hands, failed), as I have already mentioned. He published his travels in Palestine, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Media. At a later period he made several tours through various parts of Europe and of North America. It need scarcely be added how much this knowledge of countries, thus most judiciously obtained, must have qualified Mr. Buckingham as a most attractive lecturer. In 1832 he was elected member of Parliament for Sheffield, when he commenced publishing a "Parliamentary Review," in which he gave a very interesting description of the first meeting of the first Reformed Parliament. He lectured with great effect upon the Anti-Corn-Law League, the temperance movement, and other social reforms.

On the whole, however, Mr. Buckingham's career was not so fortunate as it should have been. He was a man of great natural abilities, energetic, industrious, and independent; but the very variety of his avocations proved a check to their prosperity. His manifold struggles led to unprofitable results, and he never reached a position commensurate with his worth and reputation. He closed his life of extraordinary vicissitude and adventure on June 30, 1855. He was a most indefatigable man, the manuscript journals of his various travels occupying, as he states in his autobiography, twenty-eight folio volumes, closely written.

I must refrain from further narrative; but the reader will indulge me in giving a very brief retrospect of the personal matters with which I have interwoven my literary and historical recollections.

These recollections date from the earliest period of rational life,—from my being held up by a nurse to see Lord Nelson's funeral, early in 1805, in my fourth year, when memory began. My rambles in the fine Kentish air of Lea Green; the time passed happily at Brambletye, in Sussex (a sort of rustic episode); seven years at school, where I wrote and published in ms. more than one newspaper, where the real life began; half-a-dozen years amid the picturesqueness of Box Hill and Dorking and "the Garden of Surrey," and my time divided between the duties of a printing-office, a post-office, and the business of a chemist, with occasional leisure for reading and student-work, and strolls amidst that beautiful country—all combined to fit me, at the age of twenty, to embark, for good or evil, in the busy world of the metropolis.

Every impressionable lad meets with some Mentor, or fancies the abilities he possesses may be appreciated by one whose "lines of fair encouragement" build up hopes—visions of success—though many may prove castles in the air. Such a friend I had

the happiness to find in early life, and I trust I have manfully done justice to his memory. Home I saw but rarely, though it was one of unbroken fondness and affection. I remember counting the days for the commencement of my apprenticeship with as much ardour as I struck the days off a written calendar. One benefit of this term passed in the country was, that it accustomed me to early hours, for I had to rise before light in the winter to attend his Majesty's mail.

It is a saying of Southey's, that "live as long as you may, the first twenty years are the longest half of your life." They appear so while they are passing; they seem to have been so when we look back to them; and they take more room in our memory than all the years that succeed them. Another writer says that "twenty years might be deducted for education from the threescore and ten, which are the allotted sum of human life;" "this portion," he adds, "is a time of discipline and restraint, and young people are never easy till they are got over it."

Some time before I left Dorking, I had established a magazine society, and issued a prospectus of a description of the country, the early portion of which had appeared in the "Monthly Magazine."

To the metropolis I now sped, and in a short time I had entered upon my probation as an amanuensis to the editor of that journal, and was writing from my stalwart master's dictation, as he strode up and down his dining-room, the walls hung with portraits of literary celebrities. His consecutiveness was surprising—not a hitch or omission; though he acknowledged not to fully appreciate punctuation; I had made a point of acquiring it. My first performance was condensing the "Provincial News" for the "Monthly Magazine." His elisions ("strike it out") sorely tried me; but the result of this practical lesson was most serviceable to me. A long memoir of John Rennie, the engineer, was my next lesson; and then the reading and Anglicising a translation from the German of Kotzebue's "Voyage round the World," which got the start in publication of a larger work, and received some credit from the "Quarterly Review."

Meanwhile, I did not lose sight of my projected Promenade round Dorking, a great part of which I wrote after the day's work was over. It now became my duty to visit the authors, printers, stationers, and bookbinders, and report progress of the several works in hand; now and then misunderstandings arose, and once I narrowly escaped being thrown down-stairs by an irritated author, who eventually proved my firm friend.

At length "my book" was completed: my little pilgrimages across that Caxtonian land, Bartholomew Close, were at an end; and on March 22, 1822, my volume, with an epigraph from Virgil in the title-page, appeared in the window of "John Warren," Old Bond Street—and I was happy. It is a volume of 250 pages, sold at 7s. 6d., to which a "shilling railway volume" of the present day would be equal in bulk. The edition was small; but next year the work was reprinted in a larger and handsomer form. Such was my start in authorship and publication. I had soon found friends: one corrected my first proof, and gave me lessons in pruning the luxuriance of my diction; another wrote with me the dedication to the author of "Anastasius."

I need scarcely explain further, as the work of

fifty years is detailed in these "Recollections," which, with some expansion, I hope to publish in a volume as my last literary work. As author, compiler, and editor, I have striven to be truthful, and to make myself acquainted with trustworthy materials, so as to help in the diffusion of useful knowledge. How far I have succeeded in my labours it is for others to judge. To the literary man as well as to others the solemn words of the Preacher apply, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."

A MIDLAND TOUR.

XXVIII.—STRATFORD-ON-AVON—HOME.

Our little Tour is almost at an end. We are desirous, indeed, to visit Olney, the retreat of Cowper. But time will not permit us to indulge our wish. One place, however, we cannot approach without a visit—it is the birthplace of Shakespeare. The rail has reached Stratford-on-Avon, and robbed it of that air of dreamy and romantic retirement it must have had of old. But the natural features of the neighbourhood—sweet, pleasant, picturesque, as they are seen in the poet's works—are of course unchanged; and how dear they seem to us as objects familiar to Shakespeare!

Stratford is still a quiet, old-fashioned town, with nothing particularly to distinguish it but the fact that it was the birthplace, home, and burial-place of Shakespeare. But this is all-sufficient. Here is the school he attended when a boy, and the church in which he worshipped, and only a little way off the village in which he wooed and won his bride. In Stratford he spent most of his life, died, and was buried. It was the dwelling-place of his parents and his children.

Our hearts are full and overflowing as we walk the streets Shakespeare trod. But so much has been said by so many about Shakespeare that we need say no more. The Birth-House, with its Library and Museum,—the poet's garden in New Place, and the mulberry-tree (an offshoot of the "Garrick Mulberry")—the foundations of the house in which Shakespeare died, and which was stupidly pulled down,—the old Guildhall, grammar school, and chapel,—the church and the tomb,—the cottage at Shottery, where Shakespeare wooed and won his wife, and Charlecote park and mansion, all are still to be seen. It may seem unnecessary to say as much, but there have been changes and events calculated to excite some apprehension. It is interesting to know that every precaution is taken to guard against accidents by fire to the birth-house, the whole building having been completely isolated, and the rooms heated with warm water, conveyed by pipes underground from a boiler fixed at a considerable distance; and that no fire, candle, or other artificial light, has for years been allowed to enter the building. Yet within the last few weeks this most precious architectural relic has been endangered by the thoughtlessness of a visitor who, at dusk one evening, the better to inspect an old deed hung against the wall struck a cigar match in one of the rooms where it is thought that even a fallen spark might soon set the

whole house in a blaze; and in consequence of this occurrence the trustees feel obliged to close the house at an earlier period of the evening. The total number of visitors to the birth-house in September, 1872, was 1,134.

Alterations have been made in the Stratford Grammar School that have robbed it of much of the antiquity of its appearance. Of old the courtyard of the school presented many features of interest, and the schoolrooms were approached by an antique external stair, which the boys had ascended from the time of Shakespeare. The courtyard has now been subdivided and walled, and the original character of this portion of the building is gone for ever.

The churchyard, moreover, is somewhat altered in appearance; some of the elms, having become damaged, have recently been felled, and the remainder pruned; young trees have also been planted. The fine old church itself—the spire of which, as Washington Irving said, towering amid the gentle landscape, is the beacon to guide the literary pilgrim of every nation to Shakespeare's tomb—has something changed, though for the better, its appearance; for it was embellished by the predecessor of the present vicar, who has himself continued the work, and filled several of the windows with stained glass.

Even Shottery has changed, for recent building operations have quite altered its appearance, and the old picturesque wooden bridge has given place to a new one. And at Charlecote the old mansion has been altered and added to; while the ancient church has lately been taken down, and another, in the pointed style, erected.

It is interesting to notice that Stratford is attracting more visitors every year; that the town is very clean and well-lighted, and has recently been thoroughly drained and re-paved; that it has excellent hotels, and shops of every kind; and that the death-rate is as low as that of any town in the kingdom. The Victoria Spa mineral springs, immediately adjacent, possess many valuable qualities; and several villas have recently been erected, and pleasure-grounds laid out in the vicinity. The town possesses many advantages for trade and commerce, and is connected by canal as well as by rail with Birmingham, Staffordshire, Worcestershire, and Shropshire. The population, which in 1861 was 6,117, in 1871 was 6,329.

The last day of our tour is the richest in poetical associations. In a few hours we are once more at home.

And now let us look back, and gather in the fruits of our journey.

We have seen Birmingham, the "world's workshop." Proceeding thence into the "Black Country"—in its very name suggesting only smoke, dreariness, and dirt—we have found much to please, instruct, and interest. We have gone by Oldbury and West Bromwich, to Dudley and Tipton, and glancing on our way at Sedgley, have passed through Wednesbury and Walsall, glanced at Cannock, and advanced to Lichfield; then, retracing some of our steps, we have proceeded to Bilston, reconnoitred Wednesfield and Darlaston, and rested for awhile at Wolverhampton. Taking a peep at Shrewsbury and the Wrekin, we have made our way to Stourbridge, Hagley, and the Leasows, returning to Halesowen, and going on to Worcester, Kidderminster, and Droitwich; we have visited Warwick, Guy's Cliff, Kenilworth, and then

Leamington, have gone from Leamington to Coventry, and ended our tour at Stratford-on-Avon. Everywhere we have found something to learn and to enjoy. We have seen the Mines and Iron and Glass works of the Black Country—the Porcelain, Glove, Carpet, Watch, Ribbon, and other great manufactures of the neighbouring towns. And we have found reason to be proud of our manufactures. Our Iron commands the markets of the world; our Glass exceeds that of all other countries in beauty, and lights up every coast; our Porcelain vies with that of France and China. Even those towns which have acquired a notoriety for inferior goods (under the pressure of competition and the mania for cheapness) have shown that they are capable of the highest excellence, as we have seen in the jewellery and other goods of Birmingham, the gloves of Worcester, the carpets of Kidderminster, and the watches of Coventry. We have witnessed the untiring enterprise of our great manufacturers, and have watched with delight the ingenious handicraft of our artisans; have seen that the great principle of minute subdivision of workmanship is largely and increasingly in operation; that Schools of Art have done much, and are calculated as they multiply to do far more, to improve the work of our artificers (and refine the national taste); that Science is mightily helping labour, and every day ameliorating its tasks; and that Co-operation is identifying the interests of our workpeople with those of their employers, by measures which seem likely to form a most important feature in the future industrial organisation of our country; while the principle of arbitration recently adopted gives us reason to hope that strikes, which have been common in the Midlands (and which have so much affected the interests of traders, and, indeed, of the whole nation, and foolishly invited the competition of other countries in our own markets during the present year), and locks-out, which, though rare, have sometimes occurred there, will come to an end. On the other hand, we have seen that while our legislature is setting the little children and young people of our manufacturing districts free from a slavery under which they have long helplessly groaned, women, though they no longer go down into the mines, are still largely employed in our factories and workshops, to the detriment and often the ruin of home-life, and the physical injury of themselves and their infant offspring; and that in our mines life and limb are still subject to terrible loss and injury through systematic indifference and brutish ignorance; though the introduction of machinery and other inventions, and the progress of education and legislation, seem to promise an early diminution of these evils.

As regards the social condition of the people, we have found that the local authorities in our Midland towns are awaking to the importance of sanitary measures, and in some places by the boldness and comprehensiveness of their plans, have set an example to the whole country; but while Land and Building Societies are also hard at work, and especially in and about Birmingham have done wonders, the masses are still neglectful of the laws of health, and in the Black Country their abodes are thronged with dogs, fowls, pigeons, and other pets that share the living and sleeping rooms; the pig, moreover, being regarded as "the working-man's bank," and lodged hard by the dwelling-house. (It was recently found that in Willenhall alone there were 721 pig-styes!) We find

also that the people neglect the vaccination of their children, and by that neglect imperil the whole land. (A government medical inspector recently stated that he had no doubt there were between ten and twenty thousand unvaccinated children in the Oldbury Union district; while it was reported that 134 deaths from smallpox had occurred in a population of 20,000 in about ten weeks.) Worst of all, we find that intemperance reigns, and has everywhere its slaves and its victims, who have made the boon of short hours, which they have lately won, a snare and a curse to themselves and their neighbours. We find, moreover, that there is a great want of recreation grounds and morally wholesome amusements for the people. Pigeon flying, gambling, lounging about the streets and fields, sitting in public-houses and there drinking, singing, fiddling, and dancing, are still the principal entertainments of many, though it must be owned that these are now losing their hold, while free libraries and railway excursions are gaining in favour. Never, we believe, was there a more important period in the history of the people—never did they more greatly need good advice, sound teaching, and wise guidance by the Church and the Press. Our workers, moved by the popular agitator, as the sea is moved to tempestuous action by the wind, need adult education as well as education for the young. The "Penny Classes" introduced at Birmingham would do much good among the masses everywhere. Good sound literature is wanted to supplant the trash now widely circulated. "Working Men's Clubs" (after the plan suggested by Mr. Roebuck), where our toilers may have warm and well-lit rooms in which they can read, talk, play, and take what moderate refreshment they please; and "Working Men's Own Public-Houses," after the model of Mrs. Wightman's, at Shrewsbury, would be highly useful. The wives of our working men require schools of cookery and needlework, which, with reading, religious knowledge, etc., might be taught them by trained women of their own class, organised like the "Bible-women" of London. Public baths for both sexes, and wash-houses, are much needed, and in lack of private enterprise, local Boards of Health should provide them. We have found the religious condition of the people very low—thousands habitually neglect the Sabbath and public worship. Ministers and people of every denomination are doing much good among the masses; but much remains to be done, and Scripture-readers and Bible-women are greatly needed.

In some of our Midland towns—but more especially in Birmingham—we have found institutions which might with great advantage be multiplied throughout the land. Among these we may mention the Free Libraries (which are indeed multiplying), Children's Hospitals, Cottage Hospitals, Sanataria for the Convalescent. It is not the least among the signs of improvement that the people are awaking to the merits of the great men of days gone by, and that the statues to recall their deeds are being raised in our streets. Almost everywhere, indeed, it has been our happiness to find memorials—recollections—of the great and good; almost everywhere we have found others occupying, or promising to occupy, their places.

As we have journeyed from town to town we have met with many interesting scenes and objects. The geology of the whole district is specially famous and noteworthy, and more particularly interesting at the

present moment, when recent discoveries of coal promise to give yet increased importance to our Midlands. We have entered now and then the great storehouses of nature, whence the materials on which our industry is employed are drawn; and while we have been reminded that there is no coal in our islands like the "Thick Coal" of South Staffordshire, we have seen that our stores have been prodigiously and recklessly wasted, and that it is our imperative duty sternly to economise them. We have noticed, too, that many of our mines are flooded, and that the water pumped from one mine is allowed to flow into another, whence it has to be again pumped up; but as regards South Staffordshire, we are glad to say that a scheme is in contemplation for their thorough and effectual drainage, by uniting all individual effort in that of one general corporation vested with parliamentary powers, and supported by rates levied on all the minerals raised in the coal-field. We may here observe that many thousand acres of land in the Black Country, exhausted of their mineral wealth, are available for cultivation; and that mountains of slag and shale disfigure the district which could probably be converted to useful purposes—the slag in building, paving, etc. (as the lava of Vesuvius—which slag resembles—was used in Pompeii), and the shale in making bricks and paint, as has been already proposed by some practical men.

Closely associated with our industrial centres in the Midlands, we find some of our most pleasant scenery, and some of our most romantic historical and archaeological remains. Few more delightful scenes can be anywhere met with than those afforded by Hagley, Enville, the Leasowes, and Guy's Cliff; no more beautiful cathedral, perhaps, than that of Lichfield; no more venerable and glorious castles than those of Warwick and Kenilworth. And these are but a few of the many interesting places in the Midlands; and we have not extended our tour beyond certain parts of Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, and Worcestershire. Our nobility liberally open to the people their grounds and their treasures. But the great calamity at Warwick Castle, and that at Dudley, to which we referred when there, remind us of the peril in which our historic buildings almost everywhere stand from Fire, that great foe of our national antiquities. Let us add here, that no such conjunction of the modern with the antique as we find in Leamington and its environs can be found elsewhere; nor any spot which can equal Cannock Chase as the site of a central arsenal for the kingdom.

If there be one thing more than another that we have laid to heart in our ramblings, it is the great glory of Industry, which has opened our mines, established our manufactures, built our cities, castles, and cathedrals, subjected the elements to its will, and made them multiply its power a thousandfold, and given to Travel itself, in the rail and the locomotive, the wings and the vigour of an eagle; which, moreover, has raised many men from obscurity to distinction. We have been deeply impressed, too, with the worth of all knowledge. How valuable—how invaluable—to society as well as to himself is the craftsman's knowledge of his art! And, we repeat, how valuable is *all* useful knowledge! How slowly, and in general how painfully, is it acquired! How greatly is it to be coveted! Further, we have learned to feel more than ever the great importance of little things. Think of the minute organisms which constitute our limestone, without which our

iron could not be smelted! Think of the fingers, as we have seen them at work, which furnish the world with the hardwares of Birmingham! Such are some of the lessons which we bring home from our Midland Tour.

A SWARM OF LOCUSTS IN PERSIA.

ONE day in June this summer I witnessed a sight I had often heard of but had never yet seen—a swarm of locusts.* It came on from the east, and when still several miles away appeared like an immense cloud of dust. At about half an hour before sunset the swarm arrived over the town (Shiraz). There were millions and billions of locusts, they covered a space of ten square miles, they flew about hither and thither, buzzed and whirred and caused a sound as if heavy showers of rain and hail were falling. Some of the insects settled down on the fields of corn, vegetables, and lucerne outside the town, the sun's rays were reflected from their wings, and the fields looking so lovely and green became a glittering yellow in an instant. The locusts rose—the green fields were a desert. All the vegetables, all the grass, everything green had been devoured in less than half a minute, and the fresh dark green, on which the eye had alighted with pleasure, had been metamorphosed into unsightly yellow. Of the whole crops only a few stalks remained. Another troop of the locusts settled in a garden containing nearly twelve acres of cultivated and tree-covered land; the tops of the trees were carried away as it were by magic, and the trees, mostly stately oriental planes, shorn of their proud crowns, bent down in the evening breeze and seemed to shed bitter tears at their loss. The beauty of the garden was gone. Other locusts settled inside the town; they flew into houses and their rooms, annoyed the rich, who were indolently reclining on soft carpets and cushions and enjoying their scented tea and pipes, startled the artisans sitting in their shops and employed at their different occupations, created despair in the hearts of the husbandmen and the poor people, the former thinking of their losses, the latter of the coming scarcity and dearness of food, and caused many thoughtful men to look up to heaven and say, "God have mercy upon us." Children and women, the former too young and innocent, the latter too feeble of intellect and too frivolous to think of anything but amusement, came out upon the flat roofs to pursue the locusts as they fell exhausted on the terraces, dogs became frightened at the buzzing and humming, and fled into dark and lonely nooks, and of the many thousands of swallows and sparrows which generally fly over the town at evening time in search of food, only one or two were seen here and there, flying with utmost speed to the shelter of their nests. The muezzin was just beginning to sing the evening prayer on his dilapidated minaret, "In the name of the most merciful and compassionate God," when the locusts left us. They had only remained twenty minutes, and again returned to the east, forming a thick cloud as they went, and casting a dark shadow upon the now devastated lands.

Their visits, even if they be of short duration, mean

* We are indebted for this communication to a correspondent in Persia, who has described in previous articles the terrible calamities of the famine which has visited that unhappy country. Pestilence has stalked in the rear of the famine, and the whole land is a scene of disorder and mourning. The deaths from famine alone are numbered by hundreds of thousands, and multitudes have perished from weakness and disease.

A SWARM OF LOCUSTS IN PERSIA.

ruin. In their onward course they destroy little, but where they settle down, if only for a few minutes, they create utter desolation. They eat everything green, high and stout trees as well as grass. Well can I now understand the many tales of famine caused by locusts, and acknowledge the truth of the description, "The locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt" (Exodus x. 14, 15).

The account of the prophet Joel (ii. 3—10) is also wonderful for accuracy and poetic sublimity. "The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. . . . Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path. . . . The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining."

Some of the points in the description quoted from the prophet Joel are confirmed by modern testimony. The noise made by the invading hosts when engaged in the work of destruction is compared in Kirby and Spence's standard work on Entomology to "the sound of a flame of fire driven by the wind." The poet Southeby describes the noise of the approach and attack:

"Onward they came, a dark, continuous cloud
Of congregated myriads numberless,
The rushing of whose wings was as the sound
Of a broad river headlong in its course,
Plunged from a mountain summit, or the roar
Of a wild ocean in the autumn storm,
Shattering its billows on a shore of rocks."

As to the comparison with an invading army, it is on record that a pasha of Tripoli once raised a force of 4,000 soldiers to fight the locusts, and ordered every one to be bastinadoed who refused to join the armed troops in resisting the enemy. Very little effect was produced by the resistance.

A few years ago a swarm of locusts settled upon Borazjún and Dalíkí, places fifty and sixty miles east of Bushire, and carried away a great number of heads of date palms. Many palms died in consequence, and the date crop failed totally. Some of these swarms attain enormous dimensions. Captain Basil Hall states that he once saw a swarm pass over Smyrna which was three hundred yards in depth, forty miles in width, and five hundred miles in length. It took three days and nights to pass. At the lowest computation the number of locusts in this swarm could not have been less than one hundred and sixty-nine billions, "a quantity which, if formed into a heap, would," as Captain Beaufort says, "exceed in magnitude the largest pyramid of Egypt one thousand and thirty times."

Another traveller, Mr. Barrow, tells of a swarm that invaded South Africa in 1797. "An area of nearly two thousand square miles might be said

literally to be covered with them. When driven into the sea by a north-west wind, they formed on the shore for fifty miles a bank three or four feet high, and when the wind was south-east the stench was so powerful as to be smelt at the distance of 150 miles.

Varieties.

A MIDLAND TOUR.—In the series of papers which we have now completed under this title, the writer has chiefly noted the manufactures and local industries of most interest to himself as a practical man. In historical detail he may in one or two instances have followed doubtful authorities; and here and there may be found a slip which the courtesy of local readers will correct. For instance, *Joseph* has been printed for *Thomas Attwood*, of Birmingham (p. 6). In a similar manner, Dr. G. Oliver, author of various works on Freemasonry, has been entangled with another Dr. G. Oliver, of topographical celebrity.

NEWS FROM AMERICA.—The "American Messenger," a publication of New York, has the following items of intelligence from England:—

"*Heathenism in a Christian Country.*"—A Hindoo woman, the wife of a wealthy English merchant, on the recent death of her husband in Brighton, burnt herself to death in a temple which she had erected on their grounds, where she was in the habit of observing her religious worship.

"*What a Prospect!*"—It is officially stated that 106,622 people in London receive public alms, and that beyond these at least 400,000 are on the borders of pauperism. While the population of London increases 17 per cent. in ten years, its pauperism increases at the rate of 47 per cent.

"*Inflammable.*"—Drinking people in England, whose craving for stimulants cannot be satisfied by the ordinary intoxicating mixtures, fiery as they are, have invented a mixture of naphtha and ether, which is sold in immense quantities.

These three specimens are from one short group of "items" in one paper. A selection from a year's issue would form an amusing railway jest-book. The "Messenger," however, is not professedly a comic paper.

RICH FOR A MOMENT.—The ship "Britannia," which struck on the rocks off the coast of Brazil, had on board a large consignment of Spanish dollars. In the hope of saving some of them, a number of barrels were brought on deck; but the vessel was sinking so fast that the only hope for life was in taking at once to the boats. The last boat was about to push off, when a midshipman rushed back to see if any one was still on board. To his surprise, there sat a man on deck with a hatchet in his hand, with which he had broken open several of the casks, the contents of which he was now heaping up about him. "What are you doing?" shouted the youth. "Escape for your life! Don't you know the ship is fast going to pieces?" "The ship may," said the man; "I have lived a poor wretch all my life, and I am determined to die rich." His remonstrances were answered only by another flourish of the hatchet, and he was left to his fate. In a few minutes the ship was engulfed in the waves. We count such a sailor a madman; but he has too many imitators. Many men seem determined to die rich at all hazards. Least of all riches do they count the chance of losing the soul in the struggle.

SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST EDITION.—At the meeting of the Cambrian Archeological Association, at Brecon, among the valuable books on view was a beautiful and perfect copy of the first edition of "Shakespeare," the property of the honorary president of the society, Sir J. R. Bailey, M.P., with the portrait, and on the fly-page facing it the following lines:—

"This figure that thou here see'st put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Grauer had a strife
With nature to outdo the life:

"O, could he but haue drame his wit
As well in brasse as he hit hit
His face the Print would then surpass
All that was ever writ in brasse;

"But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Book."

Attached to the volume was a cutting from the "Times" of the 23rd of August, 1869, reporting the sale of a copy of the same edition for £338 to Mr. Quaritch, of Piccadilly, from the library of the late Mr. C. T. Swanston, Q.C.



The Year.



FIRST came the small green leaves
Down in the ditch,
Then with their buds of brown
Hedges grew rich.
Celandines peeped out soon,
One here and there;
Then came sweet violets,
Scenting the air.

Birds with their chosen mates
Built their nests next,
Lambs at the first spring rain
Looked much perplexed;
Then came a burst of green,
Sunshine and shower,
Fields full of cowslip buds,
Born in an hour.

Deep in the hawthorn hedge
Under the eaves;
Low in the banks, and snug
Under green leaves,
Eggs green and blue there were,
Speckled and white,
Brown ones and scribbled ones,
All out of sight.

Little ones peeping,
Tiny bright eyes;
Yellow beaks gaping
All for one prize:
Chirpings and practisings,
Fights in between—
Oh, what a busy world,
Hid in the green!

Mothers with beating hearts,
Fathers more brave,
Tender to rear the brood,
Valiant to save:
Joyful the livelong day,
Sleeping all night;
Dreaming of work to do
With the first light.

But the sweet springtime passed! passed! passed!
Buds opened into flowers—
Lambs grew, and birds; they could not last,
Those busy bounding hours.

Then summer came, and
The passing breeze
Made pleasant music
In leafy trees;
The sweet wild roses
Threw scents about,
The bees came humming
To find them out.

Thousands of flowers
Where late one grew,
Thousands of pearl drops,
Early dew;
Coosings of wood doves,
Deep in shade;
Brilliant concertos
Small birds made.

Tangles in leafy dells,
Woodbine made those;
Trailing and twisting
About the rose;
Hums of the insect world
Near the great trees,
Through all the toils of life
Much at their ease.

Flocks lying down to rest
In shady nooks;
Cows looking grave, as if
Making deep books;
Cacklings in poultry yards,
Heard far away;
Oh, what a world in one
Long summer day!

But the sweet summer passed! passed! passed!
The leaves fell off the rose—
Flowers died—birds hushed: they could not last,
Sweet sunny hours like those.

Then came the wonders
Of red and gold,
To comfort the year
In its growing old:
Ripe fruits in hedges
For birds and men;
Fine times for squirrels
And field-mice then.

Fine times for squirrels!
Such nuts there grew;
They gathered stores
Without much ado.

The mouse's granary
By old tree roots,
Was crammed with acorns
And grains and fruits.

The bryony wreaths
And the nosegays gay
Of coloured leaves
And a scarlet spray ;
The crisp bright weather,
The smoke so blue ;
And the cawings of rooks
About things they knew.

The merry gleaners
With heaps of corn ,
Fresh carpets of leaves
In the frosty dawn ;
The clear sweet music
Of robin's song ;
Oh, lovely was autumn
The whole day long !

But the sweet autumn passed ! passed ! passed !
The gold and jewels fell ;
Bare sprays, brown trees, they could not last,
Those days we loved so well.

And now there's nothing
But branches bare,
The air is silent,
No songs are there.
The birds have nestled
In holes, or died ;
Flowers all the winter
Their heads must hide.

The ground is white
With the falling snow,
And cold and cheerless
The north winds blow.
The sky is dreary
Overhead ;
Oh, stern, dark winter,
The world lies dead !

But winter will not always last,
Snow will not lie there long ;
After the loud voice of the blast
Will come the sweet birds' song.

The year is dying : ere it's gone,
There is a song to raise !
Young voices join ; no sound so sweet,
As voices joined in praise.

F. P.



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